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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [HR](#) [NATO](#)

SUBJECT: A/ASD RICARDEL MEETINGS WITH CROATIAN PRIME MINISTER SANADER AND SABOR DEPUTY PRESIDENT BEBIC, APRIL 28

REF: ZAGREB 590

Classified By: JUSTIN FRIEDMAN, POLMIL OFF: REASON: 1.4 (B) AND (D)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) On April 28, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security, Ms. Mira Ricardel, accompanied by Ambassador Ralph Frank, met with Ivo Sanader, Prime Minister.

In addition to a tour of regional issues, Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader asked for U.S. support both in delaying the expansion of the Adriatic Charter to (non-PfP members) Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro and on reconsidering awarding the Legion of Merit to former Chetnik leader Draza Mihailovic. She later met with Deputy President of Parliament Luka Bebic to discuss bilateral defense cooperation and legislative changes in support of defense reform and NATO aspirations.

SANADER MEETING

¶2. (SBU) PM Sanader began the meeting by stressing the leading role Croatia plays in Southeastern Europe. He ran through a list of unresolved regional issues of concern to Croatia ranging from Kosovo final status to a likely Montenegrin referendum to an upbeat assessment on Macedonia. Sanader said a &Turkish scenario8 whereby Croatia is kept waiting indefinitely for EU membership would discourage not just Croatia but the entire region.

¶3. (C) A/ASD Ricardel praised Sanader for Croatia's third MAP and the MOD's effectiveness in presenting reforms. Thanking Croatia for its contributions in Afghanistan, A/ASD Ricardel said the U.S. would like Croatia to consider participating in a Lithuania-led Provisional Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Chaghcharan citing needs in explosive ordinance disposal (EOD), engineering elements, force protection, and air traffic control. She also thanked Sanader for Croatia's contribution to the training of Iraqi police in Jordan. She suggested Croatia send a trade representative to Iraq. Sanader noted that he had visited Jordan in February 2005 and was very impressed with the American-built training facility. A/ASD Ricardel listed ramping up participation in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) as another useful contribution that would receive recognition.

¶4. (C) Sanader asked for U.S. support for Croatia's view that Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro remain observers to the Adriatic Charter until they become part of PfP and the current A-3 receive a formal invitation to join NATO. Repeating his expectation that Croatia, Macedonia, and Albania should receive that invitation at the next NATO summit, Sanader noted that his Bosnian and Serbian counterparts are unofficially asking if they might join an expanded A-5 as full members instead of as observers. Sanader's best case scenario would be if Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro apply for Adriatic Charter membership at the next NATO summit, presuming their inclusion in PfP, while the current A-3 simultaneously graduate to full NATO membership. Sanader raised two objections to an enlarged A-5: politically, the move would be perceived in Croatia as reviving the former Yugoslavia and more importantly, the move would slow down the A-3 countries, MAP progress. He noted the importance of a common approach to Bosnia-Herzegovina's and Serbia and Montenegro's interest in full Adriatic Charter membership ahead of next week's A-3 meeting in Tirana.

¶5. (C) A/ASD Ricardel responded that any decision about expansion of the Adriatic Charter should not be made by the United States but by the Charter's sovereign three members. As the U.S. is not a member of the Adriatic Charter, it will not take a position on A-3 expansion. She cited the importance of maintaining PfP conditionality for Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro. Croatia should encourage Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro to meet the conditions for PfP membership and focus limited resources on meeting its MAP goals, adding that meeting the NATO target for defense spending of two percent of GDP was

important. In deciding on further NATO expansion, the allies would also consider whether a country was a net contributor to regional security or a net consumer. A/ASD Ricardel suggested Croatia look for mentors among current NATO members, highlighting the Danes as an excellent example for defense transformation. Additionally, full cooperation with the Hague tribunal will be important not just for Bosnia and

Serbia's applications for PfP, but also for Croatia's NATO and EU aspirations.

¶ 16. (C) Sanader noted that he led the Croatian delegation that met with the EU Task Force to discuss the outstanding Gotovina case. Sanader asserted that the GoC is strongly committed to locating, apprehending, and transferring Gotovina to The Hague. He cited nine indictees transferred to The Hague in 2004 plus one other in 2005. While the GoC has no reason not to send Gotovina to The Hague, all information Sanader has leads to the conclusion that Gotovina is not in Croatia. Sanader said that he presented a six-point plan on what Croatia would do in the next two to three months to the ICTY Chief Prosecutor. While Gotovina in The Hague is the best option, if he is not in Croatia, the GoC should show that it is doing its maximum to resolve the case. Sanader pointed out that out of 626 requirements set by the tribunal, 625 have been fulfilled. Sanader realizes the importance of the issue and hopes to finish EU membership negotiations within his mandate, which ends in 2007.

¶ 17. (C) Sanader repeated his &consistent⁸ position on Article 98. He has full understanding for the U.S. position and the reasons for it. As a candidate country for EU membership, Croatia must adopt the EU position. Hypothetically, if Sanader asked Parliament to consider an Article 98 agreement, the EU would forget Gotovina and say Croatia is not ready for membership because of Article 98. A/ASD Ricardel responded that the International Criminal Court remains a serious concern for the U.S. On Gotovina, A/ASD Ricardel observed that sometimes the last thing is the hardest to accomplish. She noted the recent progress in Belgrade on transferring indictees and the political maturity reflected by Haradinaj's voluntary resignation and surrender to the Hague tribunal. Unfortunately, an individual portrayed by some as a patriot in Croatia is holding back an entire country; a true patriot acts like Haradinaj.

¶ 18. (C) Sanader welcomed developments in Belgrade concerning the transferring of indicted generals to the Hague tribunal. He noted that during his visit to Belgrade () the first by a Croatian Prime Minister () that Prime Minister Kostunica praised the Croatian model for ICTY cooperation and said Serbia and Montenegro would also turn over lower-level indictees as soon as possible. Sanader believes this is quite an achievement for Kostunica.

Mihailovic Medal

¶ 19. (C) Sanader raised one final issue: the proposed awarding of the Legion of Merit award for Draza Mihailovic (see also reftel). Sanader strongly asserted that Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina interpreted this move as unhelpful for those countries seeking to overcome the past. Sanader noted that from 1942 Mihailovic was the leader of the Chetnik movement which was fascist and associated with the Nazis like the Ustashe were. His understanding was that the award would now be presented in Belgrade to Mihailovic's grandson. Croatia is shocked that the U.S. would take this action at this time. He continued that the Chetnik movement is associated with Greater Serbia ideology. Sanader criticized the timing of the award, coming on the heels of the decision by the Serbian parliament to grant the same status to the Chetniks as Tito's Partisans. A/ASD Ricardel and Ambassador Frank told Sanader that this issue is still under consideration in Washington.

SABOR MEETING

¶ 10. (SBU) Deputy President of the Sabor, Luka Bebic, began the meeting with background information on the role of the Sabor in defense issues. Joining Bebic was Kresimir Cosic, a former Deputy Defense Minister and current member of the Sabor influential on military issues. Bebic characterized the bilateral defense relationship with the United States as very good and highly valued by the Croatian people. Bebic hoped that Croatia would receive an invitation for NATO Membership in 2006 and noted that the Sabor is looking at legislation to reach NATO standards for Peace Support Operations.

¶ 11. (SBU) A/ASD Ricardel noted the important role of the legislature and thanked Bebic for the Sabor's role in

supporting the GWOT through Croatia's contributions to ISAF.
She also stressed the importance of the legislature in

assisting the transformation of the military noting that the flexible, expeditionary nature required by conditions in the 21st century is impeded if approval is needed for every change to deployments. A/ASD Ricardel related that she hoped Bebic and Cosic could use their position to build public support for NATO.

¶12. (C) Cosic remarked that a team from the Sabor would be part of a delegation visiting Afghanistan in May to survey the activities of the Croatian contingent with ISAF. He also presented a paper on the upcoming conference hosted by Croatia and in conjunction with Walter Reed Medical Hospital on Post-traumatic Stress Disorder impact on peacekeepers. Cosic stressed that transformation entails a change in mentality. A/ASD Ricardel concurred. Cosic also briefed his efforts to improve coastline protection from trafficking, especially during the tourist season, by integrating all radar and sensor data into a single, real-time database. A/ASD Ricardel noted DOD support for border security and the International Counter-Proliferation Program.

¶13. (U) A/ASD Ricardel cleared this message.
FRANK

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